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ABSTRACT

Guidelines for conducting home visits with parents of Title I students are presented. The guidelines include the following: (1) a list of purposes for home visits; (2) suggestions for what to do and what not to do when visiting; (3) types of information that parents can provide; and (4) ways to deal with difficult situations. Additional materials offered in this guide are alternative methods of involving parents, sample letters and notes for informing parents, sample award certificates for students, and summaries of three journal articles which report research on parent involvement in Title I programs. (DC)

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Hand in hand with parents

Des Moines Public Schools

A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO PARENT COMMUNICATION

UD022934

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Designed by Curriculum Service Center

DES MOINES INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
1800 Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50307

Title I Parent Handbook
Rationale, Methods of Parent Involvement and Research
August, 1978

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Preface

"I am somebody! My mind is a pearl!
I can learn anything in the world!
I am somebody!"

--Jesse Jackson

Our goal is for a regeneration of our school systems, restoring a climate conducive to learning... by greater commitment from teachers, by greater involvement from parents and community, and by greater discipline and hard work from students. We must initiate the "Five A's"--Attendance, Attention, Atmosphere. Attitude and Achievement--by which all students everywhere will come to learn their basic, proverbial "Three R's."

--Bishop H. H. Brookins
National Board Chairman
Push to Excel

Purpose for Home Visits

1. Gain insight about the child from the parents and from his/her environment
2. Establish working relationship with parents
3. Establish trust among teacher, parent and child
4. Discuss student progress and educational plans
5. Encourage positive behavior through parental involvement
6. Explain the program
7. Encourage parents to visit the Title I classes
8. Encourage parents to call the Title I teacher regarding the program.
9. Provide parents with an open line of communication to the school
10. Discuss reading and math activities that can be done at home.

Do's

1. Do inform the student that you will be visiting his/her home.
2. Do begin with a positive comment about the student. Try to place yourself in the parents' shoes. How would you feel if it were your child's behavior and ability being discussed? Even the most difficult youngster has some good points.
3. Do be a good listener. When dealing with a hostile or angry parent, silence may be the better part of wisdom. Let the parent air his/her grievances. Above all, don't argue.
4. Do end the discussion on a positive note by suggesting one or two steps the parent can take to help his/her child. Through this process the parent, in working with his/her child, will be a member of a partnership with the teacher. After the meeting, jot down the major points you feel you learned about the child from the parent. These notes should be factual in content rather than the opinion of the teacher and will serve as a useful reminder the next time you talk with the parents.
5. Do be honest with the parents (whether it be good or bad news).
6. Do send or take classroom work to the home.
7. Do encourage parents to visit school.
8. Do talk <u>with</u> the parent, not <u>at</u> the parent.
9. Do ask about the child's interests.
10. Do emphasize the team of parent-child-teacher working toward a common goal.
11. Do encourage parents to provide supervised study time.

Don'ts

1. Don't make moral judgments about student's home environment and be prepared for many different kinds of situations.
2. Don't argue. Be a good listener.
3. Don't be defensive. You need not take parents' complaints about the school personally.
4. Don't blame previous school experiences or staff for the child's problems.
5. Don't discuss other staff with the parents.
6. Don't use educational jargon-use plain English. Many parents are embarrassed to say that they don't understand... and so may miss the point you're trying to make.

Obtaining and Using Information

Parents can offer three types of valuable information:

1. Information about their child(ren)

   This includes such things as eating habits, sleeping patterns, reading preferences and abilities, interests, fears, medical needs, frustration tolerances, friendships with peers, learning style and attitudes toward school.

2. Information about the parent(s)

   This includes educational philosophy, hobbies, recreational interests, attitudes and expectations toward school, educational background, type of employment, special skills and abilities, work phone number, goals for their child(ren) and perceptions of the teacher's and parents' roles.

3. Information about the family

   This includes number of family members, preferred life-style, cultural priorities, role patterns, sibling relationships, leisure activities, special interests and needs.

Such information can be extremely useful in establishing goals for the student in developing academic programs and in communicating effectively with the student and his/her family. In the process of obtaining information it is necessary to be sensitive to parents' reactions by making requests for information voluntary and keeping information confidential. If data is recorded for later planning, it should be factual in content rather than opinion and recorded in language parents would appreciate.

Difficult Situations--How To Deal With Them

1. No telephone--Write or print a note asking a convenient time to visit the home. Be sure to add a space for reply (yes___, no___). Ask that it be returned. Attach a self-addressed stamped envelope.
2. Difficult to get in touch with parents due to working schedules--Ask parent to meet at a coffee shop or place of business.
3. Parent or child has negative reaction to the remedial program--If the child is negative, try to enlist support of parent through tactful explanation of program. It is not special education. Try to set up contracts with the student. Keep success and interest level high in class. Go the "extra mile" to develop a relationship with the student. Get the students to "try it" for a short time. If the parent is negative, it is probably because of previous bad experiences with school or teachers. Careful explanation and repeated contacts can help reduce problems. Try to find some common ground or interest which you share with the parent (ceramics, sewing, mechanics, carpentry). After establishing personal rapport, move on to school related topics. Try to get the parent to allow you to include the child on a trial basis.
4. Parent is negative about other teachers--Listen, then tactfully change the subject. Suggest that the parent contact the teacher or principal. Empathize with the parent, but quickly move to the current situation.

5. Parent doesn't want you in the home--Offer to meet someplace other than the home (coffee shop, grocery store, park, place of business, school).
6. Parent doesn't read well--Use very simple language. Print instead of writing notes to the parent. Remember that what seems easy for you may be very difficult for another person. Try to involve parent in student's homework-it may help both. Lavish praise when child improves through the help of a parent.
7. Parent wants to know child's reading or math level-- Be honest, but use tact. Attempt to explain standardized test scores, especially if there is a discrepancy between test scores and the level at which the student performs.

Alternative Ways to Involve Parents

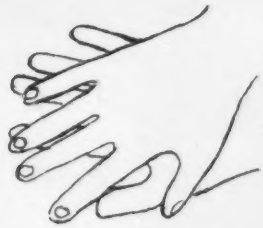
1. Potlucks, coffees, etc., at school in your Title I classroom, a parent's home or your home.
2. Inservice meetings at school for parents. (Ed Mann at the Curriculum Service Center would be helpful in this area).
   a. Make and take sessions - teacher-made games duplicated by parents to take home
   b. Demonstrate methods and techniques you believe parents could use at home to reinforce your efforts in the classroom.
   c. Presentation of slides taken by the teacher in different classes (making sure each child is in at least one picture)
   d. Door prizes donated by local merchants
   e. Math and Reading Fair (similar to fun night)
      1. Students earn tickets in Title I classes based on work completed, behavior and getting to class on time.
      2. Tickets are used for activities at the fair.
   f. Class presents program for parents.
   g. Send personal invitations to parents.
   h. No child will attend any activity without an adult.
   i. Provide baby-sitting service
      1. Using older students
      2. Using Family Learning Centers
3. Ask for parent volunteers on field trips.
4. Ask for parent involvement in the classroom
   a. as a volunteer
   b. to observe or participate
   c. when a new concept and/or skill is introduced
   d. by making appointments for parents to come and visit

5. Send home a weekly or monthly plan of assignments for student to share with parents.
6. Invite parents to the school open house (send your own invitation in addition to the one sent by the school).
7. Send home with the student the post card put out by the DMEA entitled "Good Things are Happening in our School" or any other progress reports. (DMEA card available in school office or DMEA office).
8. Take to the parent the handbook of ideas for them to use with their child. (Order the number of desired copies from the Title I office.)
9. Send parents a personal handwritten letter to emphasize to them that they are a vital factor in their child's success and report progress.
10. Declare a Parent's Day to let them know that teachers and students appreciate them. Conduct special activities for parents utilizing student leadership. Acknowledge by some method of special recognition parents who are making an extra effort.
11. Take students on field trips to visit parents in action as homemaker, business person, student, volunteer, mechanic, nurse, etc. Encourage the child whose parent you are visiting to act as discussion leader and host for the tour. Take pictures if feasible. Let everyone know that you consider the parent's activity interesting and important. Coordinate this activity with the career education program which has been implemented at your school when possible.
12. Sign a contract with parents. The parent, teacher and student sit down together and agree on a plan for student learning at home

and school consistent with the student's educational plan in reading/mathematics. Each person's role is specified—what the student will accomplish, how the parent will help and what skills the teacher will emphasize.

13. If you have devised a method for reporting student progress, ask parents to evaluate your system.

14. Ask parents to assist in preparing a newsletter at your school which could include articles written by parents, student work, school information items for parents and ideas for parents to use at home with their children to reinforce reading/mathematics skills currently being taught.



SUGGESTIONS FOR AWARDS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

Sample letter informing parent of child being selected to participate in Title I program.

Date

Dear _____:

We are pleased to announce that _____ has been selected to join us in the Title I _____ Program at _____.

The program consists of concentrated work in reading/math utilizing both a teacher and when available an associate. Because the classes consist of only two to eight students, your child will receive much individual help. In order to meet individual student needs, we use a variety of materials and activities.

We feel that our reading/math program will be more successful if parents and teachers work as a team. Therefore, we would like to make arrangements to visit with you sometime this semester. I hope to be calling on you soon.

Sincerely,

Sample letter thanking parents for home visit.

Date

Dear_____:

I enjoyed my recent visit with you regarding the Title I reading/math program.

If you have any questions or comments, please call us at _____.

Sincerely,

We're having a Title I tea

at our school.

Please come. We'd like to

meet you.

Place:_____

Time:_____

Date:_____

_____'s

Student Contract

I can _____ by ____

_____If I do, I will _____

_____. The teacher

(or parent) will help by

_____

_____ _____ ____

Student Teacher Date

Sample letter informing parent of child's gain in reading/math during the school year.

Date

Dear_____:

Your child,_____, has been in the Title I reading/math program at _____ since _____ During the student's first month in the program, we pre-tested him/her in specific reading/math areas so that we could compare the October score with the April score. This is done to measure the student's improvement in reading/math.

The tests have been completed and I'm pleased to let you know that your child's performance shows improvement has been made in _____. We're very proud of _____, and I'm sure that you are too.

Please feel free to call if you have any questions or comments.

Sincerely,

Certificate of Merit

_____

A STUDENT AT

_____

HAS SATISFACTORILY COMPLETED

_____

AND IS THEREFORE ENTITLED TO THIS CERTIFICATE

TITLE I
Des Moines Public Schools

AWARDED THIS ____ DAY O[illegible] ____ 19__

_____ _____

TEACHER PRINCIPAL

My havior Can't Be Beat!

be on time B

be a good listener U

be good to classmates Z

be an independent worker Z

be !

_____ Award

_____ did a GREAT job in _____

_____. Keep up the good work!

(19)

Teacher _____

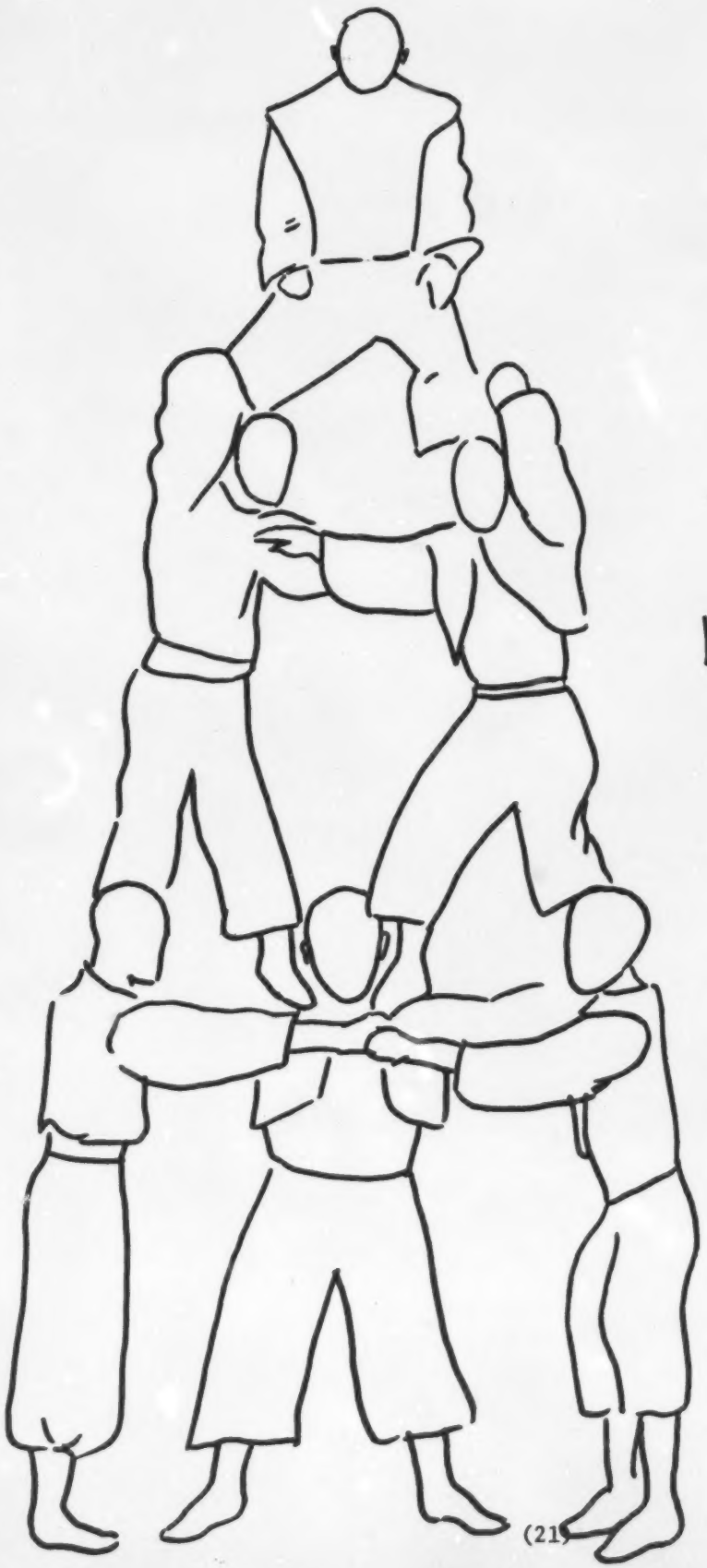
Date _____

To _____ for not

Clowning Around!

Name _____

Date _____



Human Support Award

_____

has earned this human support award for

_____

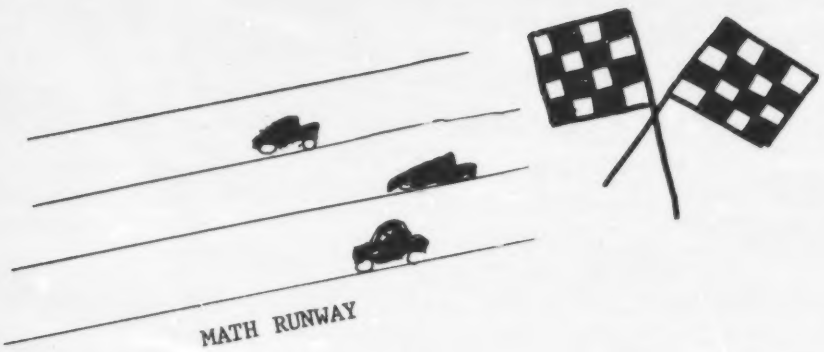
_____

_____

_____

Signed _____

Date _____



I Complete my Work Sheet

NAME _____

kly Dates	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	POINTS

I have something to quack about!

Sincerely,

I can't keep quiet! Something good happened at school today.....

Sincerely,

Breiling, Annette. "Using Parents as Teaching Partners." Reading Teacher, 30:187-92, November, 1976.

In Montgomery County, Maryland, Title I personnel conducted a series of 5 Parents in Reading meetings for interested Title I parents. These meetings focused on the following specific suggestions and materials parents could utilize to help their child(ren) read at home:

(1) books written at their children's reading level were given to parents with instructions to assist their child(ren) read for 10 minutes each evening;
(2) teacher made reading games were played at each meeting and sent home with parents to use with their child(ren);
(3) recommendations were made to parents regarding ways that they could structure the home environment to stimulate reading.

At the meetings parents had the opportunity to discuss their experiences, and children attended and read aloud at the meetings on a voluntary basis. During the period when children read aloud, the teacher modeled ways of working with children and demonstrated systematic use of positive reinforcement. Parent(s) reported children showed an increased interest in reading as a result of the parent(s) participation in meetings to learn more about reading. In a pre/post evaluation with the Botel Word Recognition Test, the majority of the children showed more gain than would ordinarily be expected in a two month interval.

Duncan, Linda J. and Barbara Vonbehren. "Pepper--A Spicy New Program." Reading Teacher, 28:180-3, November, 1974.

The Parent Education Program to Pep-Up Every Reader (PEPPER) was a program conducted at Palmer Elementary School in Springfield, Illinois, designed jointly by a second grade classroom teacher and a Title I teacher for second grade children in which parents tutored their children at home for 15 to 30 minutes daily. The parents (1) conducted sight word drill-Dolch 220 words; (2) provided practice in oral reading; (3) served as adult models in reading; (4) read books to their children. The teachers met with the parents to give them instructions and materials and receive feedback in a couple of parent's homes for a period of 20 weeks. The gain in word meanings on the Stanford Achievement Test in the treatment group ranged from .8 to 2.4 years compared to a range of .4 to 1.5 years for the control group during the 5 month period PEPPER was in effect; similarly, the gain in paragraph meanings for the treatment group ranged from .6 to 2.0 years compared to a range of .2 to 1.3 years for the control group.

Stenner, A. Jackson and Siegfried G. Mueller. "A Successful Compensatory Education Model." Phi Delta Kappan, 55:246-8, December, 1973.

The child Parent Center program funded through Title I in the Chicago Schools provided services to approximately 2,100 children, ages 3 through 9, in 11 centers which offered up to six years of education: two years of preschool education; kindergarten; primary grades 1-3. The program was in its sixth operational year at the time of this report. The important program factors included (1) direct parent involvement; (2) elimination of social and health problems; (3) strong linguistic and language orientation; (4) frequent feedback available to students and parents; (5) structured, consistent, long-term approach. Class sizes were approximately 15 in preschool and kindergarten and 22 in primary grades. The Metropolitan Readiness Test,

administered to students after they had completed two years of preschool and one year of kindergarten, reflected scores for the participating students which were considerably above the national average. Similarly, the mean reading and mathematics scores from the Metropolitan Achievement Test were at or above national norms for grades 1, 2 and 3, and the growth tended to be uniform across classrooms, grades and centers. In analyzing the data the four characteristics which stood out as major contributors to this success follow: 1) early involvement; 2) consistent program from preschool-grade 3; 3) heavy parent involvement; and 4) structured language/ basic skills orientation.